THE DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES INTO TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES.

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Background.

This research has developed from evidence of unexpected and far reaching impact on student teachers as a result of participation in international enrichment opportunities. A range of placement opportunities are offered in addition to formal and core module placements within both the Primary Education degree programme (with QTS) and the Postgraduate Certificate of Education at York St John University. These are undertaken voluntarily by student teachers at the midpoint of their training and are supported by mentors in the placement setting. Participating students demonstrate increased levels of efficacy, self confidence and organisational skills, as well as higher levels of pedagogical awareness, subject knowledge and reflective practice.

Research questions / focus of the enquiry

1. What are the motivating factors that promote the provision of, and student participation in, international enrichment opportunities?
2. Are the outcomes as expected? In what ways do they meet or exceed expectations?
3. In what ways does an international enrichment experience influence personal and professional development, and shape student teachers' attitudes, dispositions and outcomes?

Research methods / mapping the literature

- Analysis of pre and post visit questionnaires
- Individual interviews pre, during, and post visit as well as site visits.
- Interviews with placement mentors.
- Student teachers' reflective learning journals.
- Student teachers presentations to other student teachers.
- Related content within module assignments.

Analysis and theoretical frameworks

This research seeks to provide evidence to support the following hypotheses:

- International enrichment placements support students in meeting the Teachers Standards (TA 2012) as they learn skills and competencies through participation or observation of activities and events whilst working alongside knowledgeable others (Eraut 1994). Participation develops both personal and professional skills and competencies (Kuh 1993; Kuh et al 1994) strengthening a student teacher's CV and leading to increased employability. The writing of reflective learning journals helps develop reflective practice and critical thinking (Moon 2006).
- The experience impacts on student teachers' cultural and intercultural understanding (Cushner 2007) and consequently approaches to multi cultural education.

Findings and contribution to knowledge
Findings include evidence of influence on:

- Student teachers' pedagogy, pedagogical approaches and personal education philosophy, as well as on their attitudes, dispositions and aspirations.
- The placement mentors' professional development, including curriculum knowledge and new ideas and approaches brought by the students.
- Career and life plans. International experiences can have life changing consequences.
- Programme development.